

Chapter VI

CULTURAL CHANGE

Information on cultural change among the interior Jivaro 12
was obtained exclusively from elderly informants, a method
which was necessitated by the lack of written records. By
employing such time markers as the appearance of Halley's
Comet (1910),¹ the end of visits by rubber collectors (ca.
1914-15), and the dates of the founding of various missions
among the frontier Jivaro, of which the interior Jivaro were
aware, approximate indications were obtained of the inception
and duration of many of the changes. Such information usu- [177]
ally consisted of reports of trends rather than of abrupt
alterations in native cultural practices, the isolation of the
interior area having protected the Jivaro there from the dis-
ruptive incursions of the gold miners, missionaries, and set-
tlers to the west.

In the absence of adequate historical documentation, in- 124
terviewing techniques were used which had already been
developed in "salvage" or "memory" ethnography among
North American Indians. Using such techniques, anthropol-
ogists in such areas as California had succeeded in making
very useful reconstructions of bygone aboriginal cultures with
no more than a few aged informants as their source of
information. In the Jivaro case, the task was much easier, in
that there was still a fully functioning native culture and a
variety of good informants whose accounts could be com-
pared in determining what changes had occurred during their
lifetimes.

To check the reliability of the oral accounts of cultural